ATTACHMENT L
Boston Fiscal Year 2012 Local Annual WIA Plan Narrative

1. ***What principal strategic goals or priority areas are planned for the region over the next 3 – 5 years?***

   Over the next 3 -5 years the Boston regional strategy is built on the following:
   - 1).Sector convening to clarify and articulate the education and training pathways into high demand and emerging occupations.
   - 2). Identifying systemic opportunities for improved service delivery so that more youth and adults access and complete the programs
   - 3). Connecting both youth and adults with educational and training opportunities to acquire skills and earn credentials required for success in the city's labor market.

2. ***What is the anticipated impact of these goals (e.g. new business partnerships related to workforce development, expanded collaborations with community colleges, new or different "youth pipeline" interventions, expanded revenue sources)?***

   By focusing our efforts in these three areas, we anticipate having an impact in a number of ways including:

   Sector Convening:
   1). Developing a shared understanding among employers, the workforce development system, and education of the opportunities in key sectors such as healthcare, hospitality, clean technology, and other STEM-related industries

   2).Identifying the systemic priorities for each sector. For example, in healthcare filling "middle skill" positions such as medical & clinical lab technicians/technologists.

   2).Developing new business partnerships in these sectors

   Systemic Opportunities for Improved Service Delivery:
   1). Deeper and more collaborative relationships with community colleges and pre-college training providers through SuccessBoston and collaboration with ABE providers

   2). Identification and sharing of best practices in pre-college programming, especially those that accelerate learning in math and science

   3) Implementation of some of the recommendations in the Healthcare Careers Consortium's 2011 alignment report.

   Connecting Youth and Adults:
   1) Continue to broker and connect high school students into career exploration activities and employment.
   2) Develop innovative programming to support those students that have demonstrated that they are at-risk of dropping out of high school. (Burke Project)
   3) Develop Accuplacer interventions for the SuccessBoston students so that more begin their college experience in credit-bearing courses and not developmental education
   4) Develop an enhanced OJT model that serves long term unemployed customers
   5) Enhance career center collaboration with adult with basic education providers
   6) Develop and define levels of business partnership with each career center to prioritize staff interaction with those companies that meeting their workforce needs through their relationships with the career centers
   7) Expand opportunities for adults to access skilled jobs and higher education through transitional/bridge programs with adult basic education.

3. *In addition to strategic planning goals, have other regional or career center priorities been identified for FY2012? What are they?*

Capacity development is a significant priority. By convening functional best practices work groups across career centers and across state and local agencies JCS and the PIC work to ensure that all partners have state of the art information and are developing and sharing practices that benefit job seeker, business, and community customers of our systems. WIB staff currently convene career center business services staff quarterly; JCS convenes career center and training providers to ensure continuous education and efficient management of WIA system to achieve goals; JCS and PIC jointly convene a "Workforce Advisory Group" comprised by state agencies and local providers to provide cross agency education regarding programs and resources. In FY2012 WIB staff will convene a best practices group for career center "first contact" staff: front desk and librarians to develop solution oriented strategies for dealing with escalating pressures in those areas. To respond to job seeker customer requests for workshop diversification, we will pilot "lending" staff who lead career center specific workshops (not core service workshops) to other centers.

4. *What current or anticipated challenges, including specific labor market circumstances, is the region facing as a whole?*

A statistical analysis of income distribution done by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, using the 2009 American Community Survey, found Boston to be one of the metropolitan areas with the most unequal distribution of wealth among major urban areas in the U.S. Boston's population is especially bifurcated regarding educational attainment and skills acquisition. (need some more data here). The challenge of simultaneously meeting the needs of job seekers with low and job seekers with high educational attainment and aligning these pipelines along the occupational and sectoral requirements of the business community at a time when our own resources are taxed is especially challenging.

a. **What strategies, including education and training, are planned for FY2012 to address these challenges?**
With WIA training resources declining we are exploring better ways to leverage what we have. We are exploring placing caps on the dollar amount of ITAs, we will limit the number of ITAs awarded to new programs during their first year to maximize the availability of this limited commodity, we are building stronger integrative systems with our education partners, using sector organizing to make training and career pathways more transparent to practitioners, businesses and ultimately to job and training seekers.

b. **How might the state best assist the region to address these challenges?**
Continue to fund sector organizing; introduce greater flexibility depending on local demand.

5. *What are the specific challenges facing the region's career centers for FY2012?*

- Volume continues to expand at unprecedented rates
- The long term unemployed pose unique challenges
- Fiscal volatility and lack of predictability impact planning, resource deployment, demand levels of agility and responsiveness that are difficult to attain given the spread of resources
- Unabating need for safety net services (information about shelter, healthcare, credit counseling, foreclosure aversion, etc. that are beyond the charters of career centers and the scope of "labor exchange."

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a. **What strategies, including education and training, are planned for FY2012 to address these career center challenges?**

- All career centers are or have already conducted organizational self assessments to reassess service delivery structures and services to deal both with volume and diversified and deepened service demands.
- The unique challenges of the long term unemployed are being addressed by the creation of "learning labs" which provide in depth instruction in a hybrid group/individual format
- Drop-in hours for both universal access customers and target populations provide "just in time" assistance as needed
- Centers have redesigned or added very basic computer training for job search for the long term employed who recently lost their jobs and for those who worked in occupations with low demand for computer skills
- Centers are more tightly integrating job development and business services teams to make better connections between job seekers and businesses
- Centers are using more strategic targeting of businesses whose requirements and human capital needs align with the talent pools of the centers; the centers seek strategic "partnerships" with business customers who are good candidates for repeat business, who can provide strong multiplier effects through B2B networks.

b. **How might the state best assist the region to address these career center challenges?**

- Explore the use of new technologies to sponsor best practices conversations on a regular basis. Locally we convene functional work groups. But the opportunities for one region to hear about practices in another are limited to Partners meetings and conferences. Products like "Go to Meeting" could be piloted to create an ongoing opportunity for dialogue when travel and getting away from the office is becoming difficult as it is for many.
- Continue to seek additional resources as is already occurring.

6. *Please describe efforts identified as "innovations" that are planned for FY 2012 for both the region as a whole and the career centers in particular. What specific issues are these innovations intended to address?*

Boston is keenly aware of the faltering economy and the diminished labor market due to insufficient job growth. This reality is only exacerbated by the long-standing skills gap that exists between large numbers of job seekers and the substantial number of critical job vacancies that remain unfilled due to a lack of qualified candidates. Immigrants account for the population growth in the region over the last fifteen years. Many immigrants continue to struggle to reach or move within the labor market because they lack the English skills required to gain certificates or post-secondary credentials leading to career pathways.

Innovations include some of the following:

- Promotion of various job guide tools at the career centers with the requisite training as a staff development and outcomes strategy.
- Sector convening such as the PIC's Boston Health Care Consortium established to gather stakeholders from workforce development, higher education and health care to share information, network, and develop a common agenda leading to real systems change.

- Plans to more strongly connect workforce development and ABE through an agreement between Boston and DESE resulting in a programmatic shift and increased focus on next steps: training and jobs.
- Staff development training for career centers and training providers designed to address staff burn-out, compassion fatigue and the complexities of knowing the appropriate boundaries when dealing with long-term unemployed as well as those with mental health issues.
- A partnership was created with Youth Opportunity in Roxbury and Boston Career Link to facilitate and customize access for young adults ready to move from gang related activities to job training and unsubsidized employment.
- Continued development and use of group strategies to work with professionals and high skilled unemployed workers to address the larger numbers of these customers at the career centers and develop cohorts for support and networking
- Development of closer, more mutually beneficial work between career center business services and employers to promote give and take relationships with businesses.

7. *What strategies are currently planned to drive performance in FY2012?*

Regarding career centers, FY2012's comprehensive charter review will be the foundation of the granting of new three-year charters. Career centers will be evaluated along an array of key indicators tied to the strategies delineated above.

   a. **What barriers do you face in achieving your own internal goals?**

As noted, the challenge of leveraging limited resources, recruiting new partners to maximize the ROI and build effective and efficient synergies among diverse systems that serve common and overlapping populations.

   b. **What barriers do you face in achieving your own internal goals?**

8. *How is local performance to be measured?*

   a. **How is customer satisfaction being measured?**

- We conduct Point of service interviews 3 times per year at each career center and average 19 customers per session.
- Two focus groups at each career center averaging 12 customers per group
- 2-3 "specialty focus groups" per year with targeted populations averaging 10 customers per group. Last year we held groups for "Customers with Criminal Histories" and "Long Term Unemployed." This year so far we've held a group for "Long Term Employed" (i.e., employed continuously for at least 10 years and then laid off). We plan to hold focus groups with REA/RES customers and Veterans this year.
- Online survey accessible from the desktop of all career center computers. Approximately 800 surveys per year.
- Four business customer focus groups planned per year with online survey as backup for those who cannot attend a focus group
- Between April and October 2010 we gathered data through 172 job seeker interviews, 87 customer participation in focus groups, 38 businesses through focus groups and backup surveys. In FY10 we gathered 765 online surveys.

b. How has this information influenced the region's business practices for FY2012?

- Career centers are forging stronger relationships with business customers who will hire from their talent pools. This may mean working with smaller numbers of businesses where there is a higher return on investment.
- The centers, while regarding businesses as customers, are also identifying those who regard themselves as co-investors in the development of Boston's workforce. Business representatives provide workshops, industry briefings (sharing sector LMI with classes of job seekers), resume critiques and mock interviews to career center customers.

9. *Do you currently have a method in place for determining the effectiveness of services you provide?*

- We evaluate job quality based on follow up activity with particular attention to wage and hour information.
- We use wage match data to measure hire activity.
- We rigorously monitor training providers, assess their job placement performance, and assess the alignment between labor market demand in both the training choices that customers make and the positions into which they are hired.

a. Which service or combinations of services do you think are the most effective in assisting job seekers to enter or reenter employment?

We believe this requires more rigorous study. The detailed information available from the MOSES system may make it possible to assess the service mixes that are most effective for different customers. However, this requires a more sophisticated level of research and dedication of resources than is currently available at the local level.

b. How are you currently making this determination?

c. Do you have any plans to review current activities with regard to what works best to get the job done? What are they?

d. Do you think major changes in how we deliver services should be considered in order to improve effectiveness?

As implied above, regarding labor exchange we think more rigorously acquired data is needed before making changes. An assessment of what is currently effective based on service utilization and outcomes across the state (and the nation) would be useful. Any such assessment must also simultaneously take into account that job search methods are undergoing rapid change. They are not only migrating to the web but even the web based platforms are evolving (or at least changing) rapidly. Comparisons of the effectiveness of real and virtual world methods by a variety of factors (demographics, dynamics of specific labor markets, etc.) would be especially useful.
Regarding training, exploring the efficacy of different forms of content delivery (classroom based, distance, combinations), the role of coaching and where this needs to be available, an assessment of any individual customer's life circumstances (it would be great to get away from "barrier" language), would all be useful in determining what modalities work best for what kinds of customers.

e. In what direction do you think the system should be moving?

We are encouraged by the following trends and would like them to continue:

- The closer cooperation at the state level between adult education, higher education and workforce development;
- The closer alignment of all of the state's educational systems including K-12, adult basic education, community colleges and four year higher education.

We would like to see the following;

- Surveying of the field for hot topics for which the state can convene practitioners on a voluntary, periodic basis to share best practices and network.

f. How might the state help with this assessment of service efficacy and potential need for system change?

Leverage the enormous resources of the higher educational institutions in the state to study these issues and make recommendations. Gather information on already existing practices or those being piloted and use all means available to share the information and engender discussion. Also, leveraging of any statewide or regional industry organizations to contribute or fund data about their respective workforce needs would be of great help. While we gather very valuable information for job search and development at the micro level from individual employers, it is difficult to draw valid general conclusions without looking at sectoral information on a larger scale.

10. *What languages, other than English, are spoken by staff to communicate with customers in your centers? Please list.*

Ugandan	Arabic	Hebrew
French	Bosnian	Lithuanian
Spanish	Cantonese	Mandarin
Haitian Creole	Ethiopian	Russian
Mandarin	French	Somali
Henan	Greek	Portuguese
Vietnamese		

a. *Are forms available in other languages? If so, please list the language.*

See attachment – "Forms by language"

11. *Please describe the use of state One-Stop Career Center funds in your local area with particular regard to jobseeker and employer services.*

State One Stop funds are pooled with Wagner Peyser to fund operations and core services.

12. *What other programs does the WIB/fiscal agent operate in the region in addition to the WIA funded programs from year to year?*

- SkillWorks-A private/public partnership, this career ladder initiative brings together philanthropy, government, community organizations and employers to work on a set of goals of helping low and moderate income individuals attain

family supporting jobs and helping businesses find and retain skilled workers. Services include adult basic education classes coupled with counseling and coaching for incumbent workers looking to make the transition to higher education.

- Neighborhood Jobs Trust-Local funds designated to help low to moderate income adults reach family self sufficiency; investments include: ESOL, skills training, English for Employment. These funds will partly support the Apprenticeship Preparedness Program (FY 12) in partnership with the Building Trades Council, Boston Housing Authority, Commonwealth Corporation and labor.
- Youth Opportunity-A city-wide program, YO connects court-involved youth (14-24 yrs.) with case management, educational opportunities and employment. Services include GED preparation, transitional jobs, basic computer skills and placement assistance.
- TAG Formula grant which funds vocational ESOL and short-term training services for refugees where providers are able to provide a wide range of services to diverse, hard-to-serve populations in a highly flexible, adaptable and efficient manner.
- Community Development Block Grant funding, which we have locally focused on programs that provide a variety of human services that enhance economic opportunity for and employability of customers

13. ***Will the following training elements be utilized?***

ITA	Y
Group Training	N
OJT	N
Customized	N
Skill Upgrading	N
ABE/ESOL	N

14. ***For each of the above is there a sector focus? If "Yes" specify the sector(s).***

No.

15. ***For each of the above, specify any targeted population(s).***

Not applicable.

16. ***Does the local area reserve WIA training funds for periodic release during the fiscal year? If yes, please specify the percent of WIA training funds as so reserved. What is the release schedule?***

Yes. 100% of the WIA training funds are so reserved, and Boston has two WIA funding release dates; July 1st (50 %) and Nov 1st (50%).

17. ***Does the local area set a cap or limit on training funds made available to individual job seekers?***

No.

18. *Priority for Low-Income Adults and Public Assistance Recipients*

For FY2012, what local determination has been made with respect to the limitation of funding per §663.600 of the WIA regulations regarding the implementation of Priority of Service for WIA Title I Adults and Public Assistance Recipients, including access to education and training?

Boston's WIB finds that funds available for training under WIA are limited, and accordingly, continues to maintain a priority on services to low income and public assistance recipients, including those who are the "working poor" or underemployed.

19. *Priority for Veterans and Other Eligible Persons (Covered Persons)*

a. **How are you identifying "the point of entry" of federal employment and training programs in order for covered persons to take full advantage of priority of services?**
   - **Their entitlement to priority of service;**
   - **The full array of employment, training, and placement services; and**
   - **Any applicable eligibility requirements for those programs or services.**

b. **How are you ensuring that Covered Persons continue to receive the full advantage of Priority of Service in all employment, training and placement services "after point of entry"?**

The Boston OSCCs operate in compliance with WIA Issuance 09-02 regarding Veterans Priority of Service for veterans and other 'covered persons" in accordance with the requirements set forward in Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) No. 05-03, Implementing the Veterans' Priority Provisions of the "Jobs for Veterans Act." Appropriate signage is prominently displayed describing the stipulations of the policy for Veterans and "covered persons", veterans have the opportunity to indicate on the career center membership form or during the course of creating a profile on the state JobQuest tool their status and information on the policy is presented during career center orientations whether through the CCS or new member orientations.

Part 2-Attachment L1-Youth

1. *Describe the region's overarching initiatives/priorities for providing services to youth for FY 2012. Summarize the specific types of programs (WIA and non-WIA) administered by the LWIB that support the goals of Common Measures, such as strategies to improve literacy/numeracy skills, increase the number of degrees and certificates awarded, and increase youth employment.*

The mission of Boston's Workforce Investment Act (WIA) youth system is ensure that hard-to-serve, low-income youth who are not being effectively served in mainstream education and youth development systems have the skills and credentials necessary to access career-oriented employment. Boston has a strong youth development system for young people who meet a certain threshold of readiness to participate in it. The WIA system's primary goal is to ensure that there is a safety net for those young people who have difficulty accessing or being successful in this mainstream system, and to put those young people on a path to educational and career success.

For fiscal year 2012, Boston will continue to contract with alternative education and career exploration and employment programs with WIA funding. High school credential granting programs offered in alternative settings are essential to enabling former dropouts and

struggling students to make the literacy and numeracy gains required to secure high school credentials, and to develop realistic and attainable plans for post-secondary education, training, or employment. In today's labor market, the completion of a secondary credential is required to access employment at a living wage. Career exploration and employment programs provide participants with work-based learning opportunities to explore career options while developing academic, work readiness, and employment competencies relevant to a particular career track. Such programs afford opportunities to make literacy and numeracy gains while developing an understanding of the connection between education and employment.

Boston also added a skills training program to the mix of WIA-funded programs for fiscal year 2012. This program addresses the need to expand certificate-granting opportunities for older youth. The program will train young adults as Certified Nurses' Aides, a position for which there is strong demand in Boston's healthcare dominated economy.

In addition to WIA, Boston funds alternative education programming with city of Boston funds through its Alternative Education Initiative. Additional summer jobs finding comes from the city funding, private sector, and state funding.

Target Populations:
- Low-income youth;
- Out-of-school youth, including high school dropouts as well as those who may have secondary credentials but are in need of additional assistance to secure education, training, or employment;
- In-school youth at risk of dropping out, including those who are two or more years behind in obtaining credits required for high school graduation;
- Court-involved youth and other law enforcement referrals;
- Young Boston Housing Authority (BHA) residents;
- Young people in Department of Children and Families'(DCF) custody.

Intended Outcomes
- Enrollment in, and graduation from, alternative education which offers basic skills remediation, GED preparation and high school diploma options.
- Access to career exploration and employment programming which incorporates basic skills remediation in order to allow students to succeed in the program and meet the threshold required for entry-level employment. Programs must be geared toward providing an understanding of career options within a given industry, developing industry-relevant work readiness skills and employment competencies, and working to connect youth with next steps such as education, training, and employment.
- Follow-up services to insure that former participants are employed, in post-secondary education or training, or in an appropriate social support service leading to employment or post-secondary education or training.
- The development of effective strategies for preparing young people to succeed on threshold examinations such as the MCAS, the GED, and the Accuplacer.
- Access and linkages to the adult career center and training system.

a. **Describe competitively procured learning services (e.g. education, work-based) specifically designed to increase literacy/numeracy gains for participants at different developmental levels including youth with learning disabilities and out of school participants who have beginning, low intermediate and high intermediate basic education levels.**

   All of Boston's competitively procured education and work-based learning programs are designed to increase literacy and numeracy skills, particularly for those who are basic skills deficient. Boston funds alternative education programs with the capacity to address

the needs of a wide range of academic levels. Boston's WIA-funded education programs range from a high school diploma granting programs awarded by the Boston Public Schools to GED programs that offer programming geared toward a multiple levels, including Adult Basic Education, pre-GED and GED preparation. The Boston Youth Service Network, a network including all of Boston's WIA-funded programs, recently sought training and developed a resource map to develop their capacity to recognize and serve youth with learning disabilities. A recently funded provider, DEAF, Inc., chose not to reapply for funding this year, but remains a participant in BYSN, a network of youth serving agencies.

b. **Describe program strategies that ensure participants attain degrees or certificates that meet the requirements covered in TEGL 17-05. Complete Attachment L3 describing the rationale for the degrees or certificates being sought.**

Funded alternative education programs have demonstrated success in preparing youth to attain high school diplomas and GED credentials. These programs feature smaller class sizes and student to teacher ratios than the district schools where their students struggled. A more intimate environment enables them to provide more individualized instruction. The curriculum is developed to incorporate contextual learning opportunities that enable students to understand the application of their education to real-life situations and careers. Alternative education providers also feature individualized case management support and guidance in accessing support services.

For fiscal year 2012, Boston has selected a Certified Nurses' Aide program operated by a large neighborhood health center. This program features relevant partnerships to offer case management services and pre-college course work provided by a community college to ensure that students are able to complete the certification. The health center is also a large employer of CNAs and has demonstrated a commitment to developing career ladders for employees.

c. **Describe the processes and tools used to assess and enroll participants in Title I WIA program services. The response should explain the following:**

i. **the specific tools used for objective assessment to determine academic, occupational/technical, and employability skill levels and individual service needs for participants (WIA 129(c)(1)(A));**
ii. **how the program staff determines the appropriate service strategies taking into account the assessment (WIA 129(c)(1)(B));**
iii. **describe, if any, minimum standards participants must meet (besides eligibility) to be enrolled into a program service;**
iv. **how does the program address the needs of applicants not meeting the enrollment requirements of a program (WIA 129(c)(3)(B)).**

In Boston, each funded provider conducts an objective assessment process and develops appropriate service strategies independently. Eligibility documentation is forwarded to JCS for approval prior to enrollment into WIA services.

i. Most programs use the TABE locator to determine academic skill levels. One program uses the College Placement Test. Some programs also rely on information from IEPs and transcripts from previous schools, as well as assessment information from key partners such as the Department of Youth Services. Programs use a variety of tools to determine work readiness and occupational skills as well as employability, including their own interviews and application processes. Several use the Harrington O'Shea or the Youth Outcomes Toolkit as a career interest inventory and many use the Massachusetts Work-based Learning Plan to assess initial occupational skills.

Individual service needs are determined through a review of all assessment information and through ongoing monitoring of individual needs and progress.

ii. Assessment processes are designed to determine the most appropriate service strategy for each individual. Staff at funded programs are youth development professionals familiar with the interests and skill levels required to succeed at their programs as well as range of alternative options that may better suit particular individuals. Boston's WIA programs have formed the Boston Youth Service Network to better serve Boston's struggling youth and actively refer individuals among member programs.

iii. Minimum standards for enrollment vary according to each program, depending on the desired outcomes or credential awarded. Some programs have the capacity to serve students at a wide range of levels.

iv. Some programs have minimum academic levels, such as 6th grade math and reading levels, and refer participants who do not meet the required standard to another program or to an agency such as the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission.